

## Chairman's Notes

PETER MARSDEN

**F**irstly I would like to say a very big 'thank you' to all the countless volunteers who do so much behind the scenes at Wealdstone 365 days a year.

It has been rather a topsy turvy season and while the season has ended in a bit of a damp squib with us failing to make the play offs there have when the final reckoning is done been a number of positives.

The new lease is sorted meaning we have a guaranteed future at Grosvenor Vale for an absolute minimum of 5 years and because of the follow-on provisions in the lease (coupled with our regular amicable discussions with the freeholders) means that there is an extremely high chance that we will be at the Vale for the next 10 years.

We have of course enjoyed a great FA Trophy campaign and the Cup wins against Billericay, Hereford and that very cold night at Chelmsford plus those first 85 minutes in the snow away at Brackley will live in the memory forever.

Also the home game against Brackley shows just what great gates this club is capable of getting if a sustained period of success comes our way.

Ironically however I think our running for a large chunk of the season '2 teams' - a League team and a Trophy team - brought about by players being Cup-tied has come back to bite us in the last third of the League campaign as it has made it difficult to keep to a settled team and formation and we have also had this log jam of having to play an awful lot of games in the last 3 weeks.

Given the budget our eventual midtable League position is of course disappointing especially when there have been times this season when it looked like we

were about to embark on a sustained winning run.

Next season we will I suspect be playing in a far more high profile and competitive National League South with at the time of writing it looking like Torquay, Hereford and big-spending Billericay being certs to being in our League (and depending on the vagaries of the play-offs we could also be locking horns with the likes of Dulwich, Kettering, Weymouth and Slough). This I think can only be a good thing but it will be a very difficult league to get promoted from especially as our playing budget will have to be trimmed a little given that this season we 'went for it' (but it did not come off) and financially-speaking I am personally not able to contribute anything like the amounts I have put in to the club during the last 2 seasons because of the democratic decision taken at the AGM to limit any one individual's shareholding to 33%. I do believe that this 33% ceiling will come back to bite us as it will lessen the likelihood of some 'very big fish' one day wanting to get involved at Wealdstone and in the process help propel us up the leagues. While I know this will be no bad thing to some of the Wealdstone diehards who recall all too vividly the angst of the 1990's I think there is still a slight whiff of negativity / distrust around the club concerning new investors getting involved.

Our board at Wealdstone is now much smaller and I would like to personally convey my gratitude and immense respect to outgoing directors Paul Rumens, Pete Worby, Fingers, Andrew Lane, Quentin Fox and Mike Williamson - all of whom are Wealdstone pantheons and I know that our club president Paul plus Pete and Fingers will all be driving forces in our new Operations Committee which plays a hugely important role

in the day to day functioning of the club.

After many years of being sponsor via his company G P F Lewis, Rory Fitzgerald has joined the board and I am sure he prove to be a very valuable member of the Board but as I said when the new Board was publicly announced we do need fresh investment and I feel we are crying out for more new directors with 'financial clout'. One or two people have already been identified and as far as I am concerned 'the door is always open'.

We will of course be seeking to grow revenue streams in others areas particularly from enhanced commercial activities and the plethora of new advertising boards around the ground is testament to this now paying dividends and I suspect we will with Rory's help be improving the club house to help drive up revenue from bar sales and general use of the facilities.

Returning now to the playing side I know that Bobby Wilkinson is relishing the chance of having a whole pre-season to work with the players. The brief (which Bobby fully endorses) is to have a slightly smaller squad next season and with getting in more of the type of a player who will give you a 7 or 8 out of 10 every week rather than oscillating between a 5 and a 9 out of 10. I suspect that this could mean us having slightly less 'flair' players and more 'workers' but I think most of our fans win / lose or draw like to see hardworking roll-up-your-sleeve performances especially as this is what we are as a club 'all about' both on and off the pitch.

I wish all our fans a very happy close season and as my wife keeps telling me "there's more to life than football".

Peter